124

A SHORT VEIVV OF The Buſines betvveene THE CLOTHIER AND MERCHANT Of the STAPLE of ENGLAND:

Wherein is ſhewed the Antiquitie and uſe of the Merchant of the Staple in relation to the Wooll-Grower, Clothier, and generally to the whole Kingdome:

AND

How miſchievous it will be to have the Clothier the ſole Buyer of Wooll.

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356

125

THE TRUE State of the case of the Merchants of the Staple of *England*, in Relation to the Petition of the Clothiers and Manufacturers of Wooll, who endeavour to gain to themselves the sole buying of all Wooll of *England* & *Ireland*.

HER MAJESTY'S STATE PAPER OFFICE

The benefits accruing to the KINGDOME *by the Merchants of the* Staple.

1. THe Wools of most part of this Kingdome, being of a mixt nature long & short together; The long only is fit for the Combers, who make Stuffs, Stockings, &c. and the short for the Clothier, who makes Cloth, and as it growes long and short together, it is fit neither for Clothier nor Comber unlesse it be first divided. The Staplers take off from the Growers the parcels both long and short, and di- The Wools of a mixt growth;

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vide the long Fleeces from the ſhort, and in the Fleece the long Wooll from the ſhort, and ſo furniſh both the Clothier and the Comber with what is proper for either, in the Fleece if they deſire it, which is a convenience that they cannot have from the Grower, who will generally ſell his whole parcell together.

It is the Staplers Art to ſort and divide Wooll for every uſe, into 6, or 7 ſeverall ſorts. From 5 to 20 *per l.* And for this they keep Journeymen & Apprentices.

2. Whereas in the long Fleeces there is ſhort Wooll, and in the ſhort Fleeces long Wooll, and in both long and ſhort Fleeces there are many ſorts courſer and finer: It is and hath been the Staplers Art to breake the Fleeces into ſeverall parts, and to ſort the long from the ſhort, & not only ſo, but they do ſort and divide the long Wool into 3 or 4 ſorts, and the ſhort Wooll into 4 or 5 ſorts; and ſo the Clothiers and Combers doe uſually buy from the Staplers any ſort of Wooll from five pence or ſix pence the pound, to 16, or 20 the pound, according to the ſeverall ſorts of Cloth and other Manufactures which they make. And from time to time the Staplers have taken, and doe

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doe take Apprentices, and their Apprentices and Iourney-men are imployed in that part of the miſtery of the Stapler, in the dividing and ſorting of Wools, to the great eaſe and advantage of all Manufacturers of Wooll.

3. That the Staplers thus ſorting their Wools, are uſefull to Clothiers, both to the wealthier ſort of Clothiers, and to the meaner ſort: For although the wealthier ſort may have great quantities of Wooll upon their hands, yet oftentimes they doe want ſome particular ſorts of Wooll, and doe buy them of the Stapler although they have good ſtore of other Wooll of their owne: So that if the rich Clothier muſt make uſe of the Stapler, much more are the Staplers convenient for the middle and meaner ſort of Clothiers, who are able to lay out no more money than for the very ſort of Wooll which they are to uſe.

And are thereby uſefull to Clothiers.

4. That there are divers places in this Kingdome, as in *Yorkſhire*, and at *Oſwestree*, and at other places, where there dwell many

Divers Clothiers in Yorkeſhire which only work courſe Wooll. Furniſhed by Staplers.

357

Clothiers that make only courſe Cloth, Rugs, courſe Cottons and Flannels, and uſe only courſe ſorts of Wooll, and buy thoſe ſorts of Wooll of the Staplers ready ſorted: whereas they will be to ſeeke in their trading, if they muſt buy all their Wooll of the Grower, where they cannot have what is for their turne, but muſt buy both courſe and fine, which their ſtock of money or credit will not reach unto.

And long Wooll for Combers.

5. There are divers Combers, as at *Norwich*, and in *Eſſex*, *Suffolke*, &c. who uſe great quantities of long courſe Wool, which ſorts they uſually buy of the Staplers ready ſorted; whereas if ſuch Combers muſt buy their Wooll of the Grower in the Country in the Fleece, they muſt buy 7, 8, or 10 packs of Fleece-wooll to make one packe of ſuch courſe Wooll: So it will appeare, that they may be aſwell fitted for ſuch ſorts, by laying out 20 l. with the Stapler, as they can by laying forth two hundred pounds with the Grower.

6. Whereas

6. Whereas there are divers places of this Kingdome, as *Exeter*, *Taunton*, and *Barſtable*, where very great quantities of long Wooll are uſed for Stuffes, Stockings, &c. and no conſiderable Quantity growes nearer than *Buckinghamſhire*, *Northhamptonſhire*, and *Leiceſterſhire*, which are a hundred Miles or more diſtant from them; It cannot bee but very prejudiciall to them of thoſe parts, if every Stuffe maker and Stocking maker muſt goe a hundred miles or upwards into the Countrey to buy every Pack of Wooll he ſpends, unleſſe there bee a third party as the Stapler betwixt the Grower and them to ſupply them. And in a famous * Citie in the Weſt, where thereare very many Combers, yet are few of them able to disburſe ſo much money at once as will pay for two Packs of Wooll.

127

Fine Wooll for the Weſt.

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All furniſhed by Staplers.

* Exeter.

7. That the Clothiers and Combers come from all parts to *London* to ſell their Cloth, Stuffes and other Manufactures, and when they either cannot ſell them, or elſe

358

when they have ſold them, they uſually come to the Staplers, and have Wooll of them fit for their uſes, whereby their Trade is driven.

The Clothiers and Combers buy of the Staplers at Sheer time.

8. The Clothiers and Combers doe frequently buy Woolls of the Staplers, even at Sheere time, when there is plenty of Woolls in all Countries; which they would not doe, if they did not finde a Conveniencie in it. For it is to be obſerved that the Clothier and Manufacturer of Wooll was never reſtrained to buy Wooll when, where, and as much and as often as hee pleaſed.

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The Inconvenience and Miſchiefe to the Kingdome, if the Staplers ſhould be reſtrained to buy Wooll and uſe their Trade.

1. IT will bee miſchievous to the Lords, Knights, Gentlemen, and Farmers of this Kingdome, who have great Parcels of Wooll, if the Stapler be reſtrained; Becauſe ſuch Growers will bee bound not onely to ſell to the Clothiers in Generall, and none elſe, but to the richeſt ſort of Clothiers, the meaner ſort not being able to compaſſe them, who will either make them ſell their Wooll as they liſt, or keep it on their hands. And its wel known, that divers growers have bin forced to keep their Wools 3, 4, or 5 yeares upon their hands, though it lay

Sole buying of the Clothier will be miſchievous to all Growers that have great parcells.

Which rich Clothiers only are able to buy.

Growers have kept it 4, 5, 6 yeares, & then bought onely by the Staplers after the refuſall by Clothiers.

lay very neare the Clothiers, and have beene faine to ſell it at laſt to the Staplers.

Miſchievous to Growers that are in remote parts.

2. And very ill wil it fare with ſuch Growers as live in remote parts of the Kingdom, farre diſtant from Clothiers; becauſe the Wooll will lye on the Growers hands, eſpecially if cheape, which will ſoone bee, if the Clothier bee the onely buyer.

And all Growers that are neceſſitated to ſell Wooll for harveſt, &c.

3. Beſides great damage will it be to all Growers which are accuſtomed or neceſsitated to ſell their wools at ſheer time for monies to get in their Harveſts, (who are a very conſiderable number throughout the Kingdome) becauſe if the Clothiers be the ſole Buyers, they will buy at leiſure, and at what price they pleaſe.

And Growers that have wool of mixt nature long and ſhort as in Kent, Eſſex, Bucks, &c.

4. Much loſſe will it be to ſuch Growers as have their Wools of a mixt nature long and ſhort together, as it is in *Kent*, *Eſſex*,

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

ſex, Bucks, Warwick, Lincolne, and moſt Countries of this Kingdome, if the Staplers be reſtrained; Becauſe the ſhort wooll is onely fit for the Clothier, and the long for the Comber, and the whole parcell together is fit for neither, except it be devided: The Staplers take off from the Growers the whole parcell being long and ſhort, whereas otherwiſe the Grower muſt take two Chapmen for one and the ſame parcell, or keep his Wooll in his hands.

The ſhort is for the Clothiers, the long for the Comber.

The whole parcell fit for neither. The Stapler takes both.

5. It will bee a great detriment to all Growers, (who farre exceed Clothiers in number) if their Wools bee not taken off in convenient time; for thereby Tenants will be diſabled to pay their Rents, and Growers bee deſtitute of monies, if the Clothier be the onely buyer.

Growers farre exceed Clothiers.

They'll be diſabled to pay Rent.

6. It will bee a great dammage to all Growers, if none but Clothiers ſhall buy Wooll; Becauſe Growers were enforced to ſell their Wooll within a yeare, and

And muſt not keep their Wools above a yeare by the Stat.

360

to take what price ſoever the Clothier will give him, or elſe incurre the penalty of the Statute which gives ten ſhillings upon a Tod forfeiture, if the Grower keep it above a yeare, being offered the generall price Wool is then at.

7. And whereas by the Statute of 5 and 6 *Edw. 6. cap. 7.* none were to buy Wooll but the Clothier and the Stapler, the Brogger and Iobber being reſtrained, upon complaint of the Growers that their Wools were not taken off their hands, although both Clothier and Stapler were buyers. Thereupon by the Statute of 21 *Jac.* that Law of 5 and 6 *Edw. 6.* was repealed, and ſo it was left free for all men to buy Wooll; ſo that if it were thought inconvenient to the Growers when buying of Wooll was in the hands both of the Clothier and Stapler, what would it be if it be left to the Clothier onely?

8. And whereas it is intimated by the Clothiers

130

Clothiers, that they doe uſe all the Wooll of this Kingdome, and doe pretend that they will give the Growers as good a price, as when buying of Wooll is at generall liberty: and ſo that what they deſire in being the onely buyers, ſhall be rather for the benefit than loſſe of the Wooll-Growers.

For Anſwer, 'Tis true the Clothiers and other Manufacturers uſe all the VVooll for their ſeverall uſes, but they uſe it at their owne leiſure; and their leiſure will not agree with the occaſions of the VVooll-Grower: And what ever they may pretend for giving the Grower as good a price for wooll, conſtant Experience, and common Reaſon teacheth, that if the Clothiers bee the ſole buyers, they will take off the Wooll from the Grower at what time they pleaſe, and at what price they pleaſe, as is before expreſſed.

361

Objection 1. The Clothiers pretend that they can and doe make out in cloth all the Wooll that they buy, whether long or ſhort, and ſo can take off all Wooll from the Grower without the Stapler.

Anſw. 1. It is a knowne thing that long Woollis not fit for cloth, and therefore the Clothiers in generall, if they have any long Wooll; they ſell away their long Wooll and courſe VVooll againe to Staplers or Combers, and the Combers ſell away their ſhort VVooll to the Staplers and Clothiers.

And if a Clothier buy long and ſhort together, hee muſt lay out his ſtock unneceſſarily for a great part.

2. If the Clothiers uſe all Wooll in cloth, they ſpoile a very great part of it; for long VVooll is worth twelve

twelve pence *per* pound to the Comber, which is not worth eight pence *per* pound to the Clothier: And ſhort Wooll, which is not uſefull at all to the Comber, is onely proper for the Clothier.

Object. 2. The Clothiers can ſort their Wools themſelves, and ſo need no Stapler to ſort for them.

Anſw. 1. That though the Clothiers can ſort Wooll fit for their owne uſes, yet they neither can, nor doe ſort for other mens uſes; which appeares by this reaſon, for that all the ſorts of Wools which the Clothiers ſell to Staplers, the Staplers are faine to ſort them over againe before they can ſell them to bee uſefull for any body.

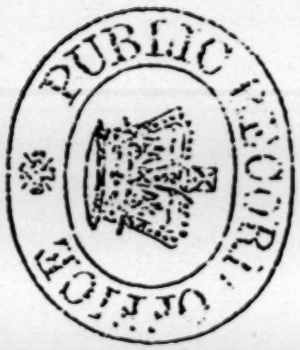
The Staplers ſort the Wooll they buy of the Clothiers, after the ſame were ſorted by the Clothier.

Object. 3. The Staplers are Ingroſſers and Fore-ſtallers.

 Anſw.

362

Answ. 1. A free Subject exerciſing his Trade cannot bee ſaid in ſo doing to bee a Fore-ſtaller or Ingroſſer, and by the particulars aforeſaid it appears that the Staplers are farre from being Ingroſſers or Fore-ſtallers; for their livelyhood is onely by the buying, ſorting, dividing, and fitting all ſorts of Wooll to all ſorts of Manufacturers; and the Staplers ſell Wooll at all times, all the yeare, be Wooll cheap or deare; and are, and ever were, a neceſſary party, continued both in Relation to the Wooll-Grower and Clothier.



2. That many of the Clothiers themſelves doe practice that which they unjuſtly complaine of againſt the Staplers; for many Clothiers doe Foreſtall and Ingroſſe Wooll, onely to ſell it againe, and doe ſell againe what they might uſe.

Object.

Object. 4. The Wooll-Grower, as before by the Stat. 5. *Edw.* 6. *cap.* 7. was limited to a certaine time wherein to sell his Wooll, and so it's fit the Stapler should sell his Wool off within six Moneths after he buyeth it.

Answ. That limitation was one cause why that Stat. was repealed; and the reason of it will induce not to limit the Stapler; for if you limit him to sell off by such a time, you must appoint him a Chapman to take it from him at a just rate: To compell mee to sell when there is no Chapman to buy, it cannot bee. A Parliament man * affirmed, he was forced to keep his Wooll five yeares in a great clothing Countrey, and no Clothier, or Manufacturer of Wooll would buy it, untill at length he sould it to a Stapler: And this hath been the case of many hundred of Wooll-Growers of the Kingdome.

* Sir *Michael Livesey.*

Object.

363

Object. 5. If the Stapler be of ſo much uſe and advantage to the Clothier and Manufacturer of Wooll, as is before in many particulars expreſſed; how comes it to paſſe that the Clothier now labours totally to ſuppreſſe and extirpate the Merchant of the Staple?

Anſw. The ſhort and true Anſwer is, the Clothier ſeekes onely his private profit, which farre exceedes his uſe and benefit by the Stapler; Hee hath already in his owne conceit, not onely ſwallowed downe, but even diſgeſted a Monopoly. For grant what he askes, and a few years will make him rich, and the Kingdome poore.

And it is to bee obſerved, that though the Clothiers do maliciouſly in their Petition intermixe the Staplers with the Broggers and Iobbers,

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under the common Title of Ingroſſers; That the Staplers are an ancient Societie, and have been Incorporated 15. *Edw.* 3. And 3 *Eliz.* and both Charters confirmed by ſeverall Acts of Parliament, and have had a conſtant allowed Trade in all times in buying and ſelling of Woolls, and have been alwayes buyers of Wooll as well as the Clothiers. Its true the Broggers and Iobbers are Interlopers in the buying and ſelling of Woolls, and are increaſed and growne extraordinary numerous ſince the 21 yeare of K. *James*, and more eſpecially of late years, being Inne-keepers, Taylors, Glovers, &c. So as by all the Premiſſes it plainly appeares, That the Clothiers endeavour, 133

1. To obtaine a Monopoly, *viz.* a Priviledge of beeing the onely buyers of wooll, which they never yet had, but now ſeek it for their owne private ends, and to enrich themſelves, which if ſuffered will undoe the Grower; though the Clothiers ſeemingly pretend the good of the Kingdome.

364

2. That they would put down the Staplers, who are of an ancient Profession, and have no other livelyhood but from buying of Wooll, and would set themselves up in in their Trade: For a Clothier under colour of making some Cloth may buy what Wooll he please, and sell it againe; and so the Clothiers will use; and ingrosse the Staplers Trade as well as their owne Trade of Clothing.

All which the Inconveniences aforesaid will occurre, and many more, which at present upon so great an Innovation cannot possibly be foreseen or prevented.

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